Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Workplace Preparedness for Terrorism

Report of Findings to Alfred P. Sloan Foundation

CSTS

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for Terrorism

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Comprehensive workplace preparedness for terrorism must address and integrate the psychological and behavioral aspects of terrorism preparedness and response in order to address issues of human continuity.

Comprehensive workplace preparedness for terrorism must address and integrate the psychological and behavioral aspects of terrorism preparedness and response in order to address issues of human continuity. Recognizing the beliefs and attitudes that influence behavior and drive behavioral change is essential if organizations are to effectively commit time to educate employees about preparedness and to practice preparedness behaviors. Understanding human continuity issues must also inform development of the interventions that can protect, sustain, and foster the recovery of individuals and facilitate resumption of work and performance. Human continuity factors in preparedness encompass a range of issues that can contribute to a corporation's threat assessment, its employee preparedness, the health and performance of employees, and the role of leadership in fostering organizational resilience to the impact of disaster and terrorism.

In the United States the workplace has been the primary target of terrorism. Significant negative impact on the nation's economy, infrastructure, and health can be accomplished through workplace disruption. Many workplaces—including the mass transportation systems upon which Americans rely to reach work—are relatively unprotected. These factors suggest that the workplace will continue to be an ideal target for international terrorists. Despite this, recent studies have demonstrated a lack of preparedness and a perceived lack of employer emphasis on workplace preparedness for terrorism. After observing the wide-scale destruction of events such as the September 11th terrorist attacks some corporations have focused increased attention on business continuity plans and physical security. However, the extent to which corporations have taken measures to protect human continuity through training and educational efforts aimed at altering disaster (or terrorism) behavior are less clear.

With the research support of the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress (CSTS) of the Uniformed Services University undertook a study of several large U.S. corporations to systematically explore the present status of human terrorism preparedness in the workplace. Through this study, we identified the functions and structures critical to corporate human continuity preparedness and identify barriers to, and opportunities for improving corporate workplace terrorism preparedness.

Through a series of preliminary interviews with leaders of and consultants to several US corporations, members of CSTS identified corporate divisions and personnel instrumental to terrorism preparedness in the corporate workplace. These informants provided initial perspectives on preparedness efforts, perceived challenges, and potential areas for increased attention from within their own corporations and others with which they had first-hand knowledge or experience. The interviews formed the basis for the development of the semi-structured survey instrument created by the CSTS for more systematic examination. After institutional review board approval, the CSTS engaged a diverse sample of US Corporations and conducted site visits and semi-structured interviews of corporate leaders including Presidents and CEOs, and Directors of Corporate Security, Employee Assistance, Corporate Health/Medical, and Human Resources divisions, as well as product line managers. In the analysis of these interviews the CSTS made no attempt to compare or contrast the relative preparedness of sampled corporations. Interview data and observations were synthesized to identify commonalities between corporations. Through this iterative process, the CSTS established recommendations applicable to corporate workplaces as areas for action and further study.

Findings

1. The corporate security office emerged as the most critical corporate voice in identifying preparedness vulnerabilities to leadership, transmitting the message of security awareness and practices (behavior) to corporate employees, and promoting a culture of anticipation of future disasters. As one of our interviewees said, "Good security is good business." Security is at the core of human continuity preparedness only when corporations recognize the value and need to foster a "community of safety" rather than merely protect buildings. When security is not focused on individual employee behaviors, day-to-day *and* in response and recovery from a disaster or terrorist event, human continuity preparedness—and therefore citizen preparedness—is less effective.

2. Preparedness, at the "macro" level, and for the individual employee, is motivated by threat awareness, threat assessment, and threat perception. Defining events—a corporation's historical experience with crises and understanding of past responses—shape the identification of potential future threats and efforts to prepare for these events. Other factors influencing threat identification include geographical location (particularly the location of corporate headquarters) and degree to which the corporate "brand" is perceived as a potential terrorist target. Points of failure (e.g. as critical nodes for material supply, vulnerable geographic locations, or relatively unsecured or unprotected corporate functions or processes) are organizing principles upon which corporations based concerns about future business disruption and hence, preparedness efforts.

3. In addition to corporate security, the divisions of employee assistance, personnel/human resources, occupational health (medical and Employee Assistance Program (EAP)), and senior corporate leadership (e.g. President/CEO) served primary functions in establishing a corporate culture of preparedness. Coordination between these offices appeared crucial to comprehensive preparedness planning and response (e.g. translating this culture into a "climate" in which individuals altered their planning and

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behaviors to protect themselves and their families and, therefore, the corporation. The degree to which all of these divisions were involved in the planning and response processes varied across corporations as did their integration in the preparedness process. The extent to which these service divisions (particularly occupational health) were internal versus outsourced to venders substantially affected the level of attention given to and degree of participation in preparedness efforts. This affected both knowledge of present corporate needs and planning for internal and external (i.e. contracted for) services critical to human preparedness.

4. In general, protection of physical plants and corporate business functions rather than personnel forms the basis of response plans. Such planning was consistent with an emphasis on traditional business continuity plans and traditional models of points of failure. The degree to which human continuity was prioritized or measures to protect this had been initiated was variable across corporations.

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5. Corporate leaders noted that communicating to employees a recognition of their value to the corporation—of instilling in employees the idea that they "mattered"—was important to preservation of function in times of crises. Specific programs, as well as physical and monetary resources are necessary to communicate this message. Communication systems within corporations (e.g. corporate websites or intranet) that may currently serve as a mechanism for accountability of personnel after disaster may also be used to amplify the message of concern to many, but not all, employees.

6. Efficient information flow within corporations, between corporations, and between corporations and local and federal government agencies regarding threat analysis, preparedness, and terrorism response facilitate integrated community response. On a national level it appears efforts to create these integrated systems of communication have been limited to date. Notable exceptions are present.

7. Corporations exist within larger "communities" of related enterprises, suppliers and traditional communities of towns or cities where business operations occur. Interdependence is the norm for safety (fire, police, emergency response) as well as for effective product delivery. Loss of suppliers, transportation or community support can disrupt corporate continuity. Effective corporate response to terrorists attack may require assistance from related corporations as well as local, state, and federal governments and institutions. Likewise, corporate resources and the integration of resources from multiple corporations may be necessary for effective community responses to large scale attack. Integrated personal relationships across these boundaries are critical to sustaining actions post a terrorist event.

8. Threat awareness, assessment, and perception drive the allocation of security resources and assignment of priorities. Corporations, faced with finite resources for response planning and security efforts allocate resources based on past experience and in so doing may not apportion protective measures and related safety/security awareness training evenly across all personnel. This can create discontent and rifts in corporate function across divisions/departments/locations.

9. Corporations assess their individual risk specifically for a terrorist attack variably and allocate according to these assessments. However, corporations universally identified hazards to business operations (e.g. disasters (natural and human made) and accidents) and to varying degrees established training in response to these phenomena. Corporations tended to embrace an "all hazards" response plan based on "defining event" disasters that their corporation had previously experienced rather than emphasizing preparedness specifically for terrorism.

10. Corporate "culture" and corporate values influence both the content of disaster preparedness plans and the effectiveness with which plans and training were communicated throughout a corporation. For example, if safety is a widely recognized corporate value, then preparedness training may be effectively embedded in corporate safety training. The extent to which employees are "invested" in the corporate values influences the degree to which they respond to messages delivered in this context. When employees have experienced corporate values and culture as guiding principles during "defining events" this experience influences the effectiveness of preparedness initiatives framed within corporate culture and values.

Recommendations

1. Corporate security should be positioned, and should have the knowledge and interest for a leadership role for human continuity preparedness. Education of this group regarding the means to building "a community of safety" will enhance their ability to perform in this capacity and build a vision of this role.

2. Medical Directors and Occupational Health Divisions are under-identified as a critical component of corporate human continuity. Their distance from corporate decision making should be reduced as it currently limits their contribution to assessing threat of, planning for, and responding to the health implications of terrorism—especially bioterrorism and infectious disease outbreaks with population-health implications (e.g. SARS, Avian flu).

3. Employee Assistance Programs and Occupational Health require knowledge of evidence-based and evidence-informed interventions to mitigate, respond to and foster recovery from disasters.

4. Integration, collaboration and cross functionality of roles within corporations in human continuity planning is critical for, responding to and recovery from terrorism to include corporate security, employee assistance, medical, human resources, and corporate communications. Preparedness initiatives must promote this integration.

5. Defining events are central to the manner in which preparedness is integrated into or absent from corporate human continuity preparedness. Changing preparedness and response behavior must build upon the experience, lessons, and language of defining events. Finding unified concepts, operations, and cultural supports that resonate with existing corporate disaster paradigms for each corporation as well as language that addresses human continuity aspects of disaster response is needed. In general, talk-

ing about "terrorism preparedness" per se is not easily understood in the corporate world, nor easily implemented. In order for terrorism preparedness to be understood and implemented it requires "translation" into the defining event language of a specific corporation's history experience with a disaster or critical event.

6. Since corporations are part of communities in which they conduct operations around the globe they are components of local, state, federal and private networks. Coordination at the local level across these boundaries is necessary for human continuity planning for terrorism, disasters and critical incidents. From fire planning to daycare and inoculation for biological events (influenza to bioterrorist agents) the boundaries of corporations and their communities are porous and require resourcing and planning to meet human continuity and preparedness objectives. Education on the issues of community planning and response are particularly needed for the core preparedness functions (e.g. security, employee assistance, medical, human resources and communication)

Proposed Initiatives

1. Initiate targeted knowledge dissemination programs for a) corporate leadership, and b) corporate functional leaders (e.g. security, occupational health (medical and EAP), human resources and communication). Educational programs should foster integrated disaster planning for human continuity. Such a program needs to include knowledge about organizational and behavioral responses to terrorism, interventions and scenario training. Scenario based education in particular using 9/11 and hurricane Katrina as case studies for planning and response to complex catastrophic events which include loss of infrastructure can yield increased knowledge and preparedness. Writing useable scenarios that can teach human continuity requires expertise in terrorism preparedness, disaster response, human behavior and teaching/education. The Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress (CSTS) is uniquely positioned and skilled in this task.

   In addition, the CSTS is presently seeking partners to join in support of funding received from SAMSHA for the first knowledge dissemination conference for corporate preparedness. This meeting will be a major step in both educating for human continuity and bringing together various corporate functions, across various industries, to share knowledge and practice and identify gaps in terrorism preparedness for human continuity.

2. Develop educational materials for corporate human continuity preparedness and response. A model for this is the "Courage to Care" health education program of the CSTS. The CSTS has initiated an extremely successful health education campaign that is now distributed around the nation and the globe. Directed to medical providers and others who reach the public "Courage to Care" is based on finding "teachable moments. It has been distributed with information on preparing for influenza, helping families think about evacuation, and training families and health care providers in psychological first aid. This program is a model of what is needed for the corporate functions of security, human resources, and occupational health (medical and EAP),

Initiate targeted knowledge dissemination programs for a) corporate leadership, and b) corporate functional leaders (e.g. security, occupational health (medical and EAP), human resources and communication).

3. Provide real time knowledge dissemination/consultation to corporate disaster/critical incidents to foster human continuity. This is a model the CSTS has used for many years to develop rapid information and disseminate it in response to real time questions. For example, recently the CSTS provided corporate consultation and knowledge materials for human continuity for the Katrina hurricane, addressing the issues of "continuous operations" required for business recovery.

4. Develop lessons learned from corporate experience with Hurricane Katrina as an event that can teach about response and recovery for weapons of mass destruction. The CSTS has consistently held lessons learned meetings for issues of bioterrorism, and other weapons of mass destruction, yielding important recommendations for use by public and private agencies. The development of a three day conference of security, human resource and occupational health corporate leaders, in conjunction with academic and operators, to think together on the present barriers to preparedness and needed programs could yield highly valuable input often not developed in ways that are useable. The CSTS had a record of successful Lessons Learned meetings that have influenced federal, state and private agencies. Such a meeting can also identify regulatory and legal agendas for preparedness response.

5. Expand the present study to a survey based approach of various groups (e.g. security, EAP) to increase knowledge of barrier and opportunities for preparedness across a wide range of corporations. Additional knowledge is needed. Systematic information collected now with the assistance of partnerships with the corporations and individuals who participated in our study—nearly all of whom volunteered to be resources in the future—could yield corporate study of corporate preparedness backed by the skills and knowledge of the CSTS.